

CARPOOLS

What is a carpool?

Commuters who share a private vehicle with at least one other adult commuter are considered a carpool. Carpools, as high occupancy vehicles (HOVs) can use “diamond lanes” available throughout the Puget Sound region. Diamond, or HOV, lanes are restricted to vehicles with a minimum of two riders, although in some cases (such as SR-520), a minimum of three may be required.

Employees who carpool to work may enjoy such benefits as special parking spaces, parking discounts, or a ridesharing subsidy at their worksite.

What are the benefits of a carpool?

To Employers:

- decreases the number of single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips and reduces the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) to and from the worksite, helping to achieve or maintain CTR goals;
- reduces the need for employee parking, and may make more spaces available for clients;
- carpool parking signs and “hang tags” can be easily, and affordably, obtained from Metro to help companies implement a carpool parking policy;
- a computerized ridematching database is offered by Metro to help employees form carpools.

To Employees:

- carpoolers can use special diamond, or HOV, lanes and may even have shorter travel times;
- offers a highly reliable commuting option that saves time and money;
- carpools of three or more riders can register for a guaranteed ferry space with priority loading;
- offers a very flexible commute option since carpoolers can set their own routes and trip schedules, and can carpool as many – or as few – days each week as schedules allow;
- a computerized ridematching database is offered by Metro to help find carpool partners.

How does carpooling help meet CTR goals?

Helping employees form a new carpool, or join an existing carpool, may reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles (SOV) travelling to the worksite daily. Encouraging employees to rideshare is also helpful at worksites with limited parking, and may be an attractive option when a company is required to improve its transportation plan.

What are favorable conditions for carpools?

Carpools work best when:

- the company provides ridesharing subsidies such as Commuter Bonus Plus vouchers, a guaranteed ride home program, and preferential or discounted parking to ridesharing employees;
- the worksite has groups of employees commuting from similar home origins, with compatible schedules;
- employee parking is limited or high-cost;
- transit service may be limited to the worksite.

How much does a carpool cost?

Participants in a carpool share commuting costs, lowering the cost of commuting for each rider.

Answers to commonly asked questions:

Q. Why should an ETC establish a carpool program at their worksite?

A. Carpools are very effective in helping to reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles (SOV) traveling to a worksite, especially where employee parking is limited (or may become limited) or expensive. Carpools are another way of encouraging employees to “share the ride,” and even save money. Companies that offer related financial incentives go even further to make their carpool programs count as an employee “perk”: employees perceive carpooling as a highly-valued benefit when it is accompanied by an employer-supplied financial incentive, and/or reserved priority parking.

Q. Besides reserved parking or parking discounts, what other financial incentives are there for carpools?

A. Many employers buy vouchers, called Commuter Bonus Plus, in denominations of \$5 and up, and award them to employees who carpool and use other alternative commuting methods. Commuter Bonus Plus vouchers are used like cash at participating retailers – listed on the vouchers – to buy items like gas, tires, bicycle equipment and other goods or services. The vouchers are popular, easy to give and use, and make an attractive financial incentive for employees to carpool. Contact Metro for more information.

Q. Does carpooling work well at sites that have non-traditional work schedules?

A. Carpooling is an excellent incentive for employees with non-traditional work schedules, such as a “swing-shift”, as long as some employees work similar shifts and live in similar geographic areas. Or employees may live along a logical commuting route (driver is able to drop off and pick up other riders).

Q. What if employees want to carpool, but the company does not offer a guaranteed ride home program?

A. Metro provides a service called Carpool Courtesy Cab. Carpoolers must register with King County Metro to receive emergency rides home when required to work late unexpectedly, or in case of certain other unforeseen circumstances and cannot adhere to their carpool’s normal schedule. Contact Metro for details.